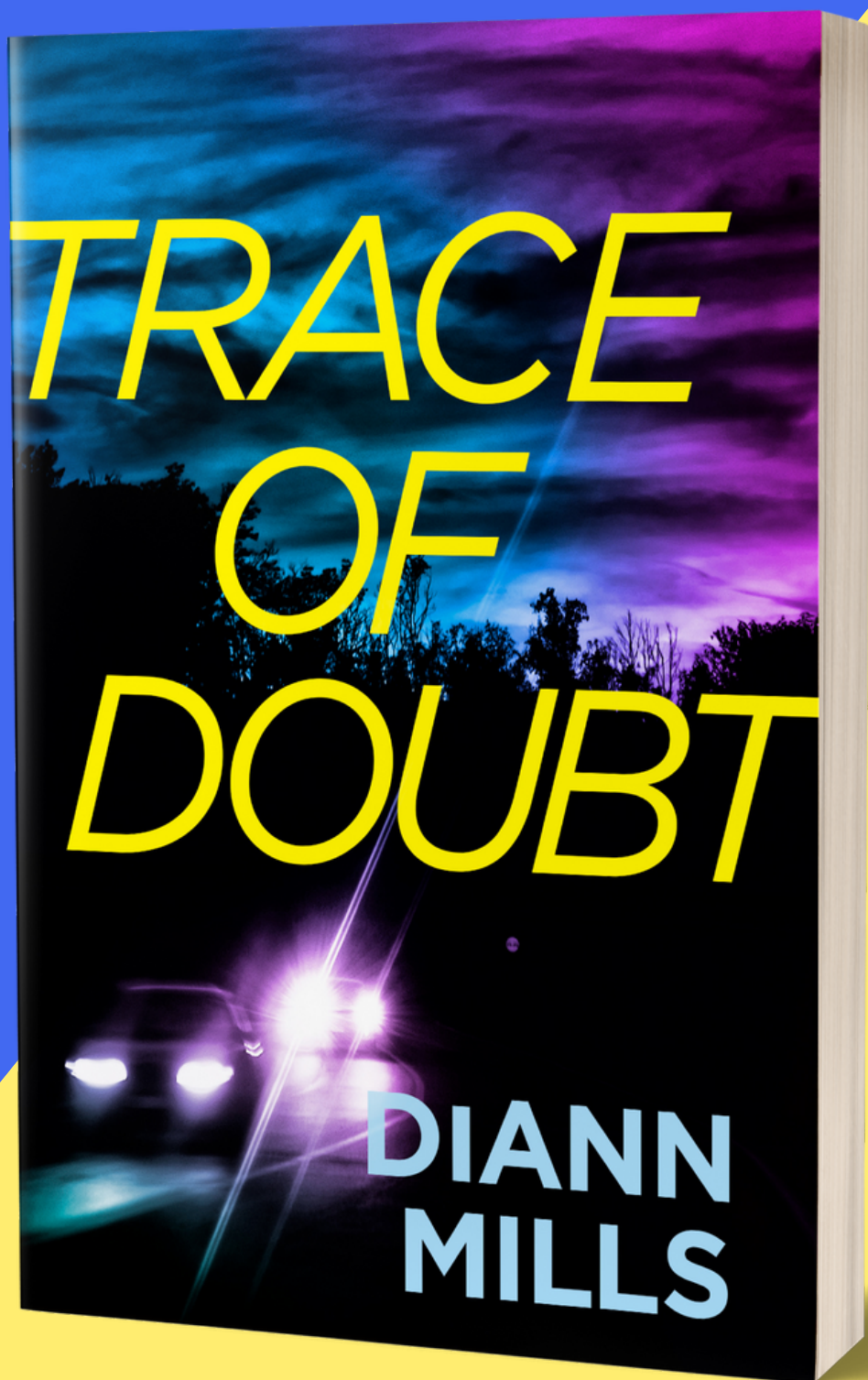


# BOOK CLUB KIT

---





## MEET DIANN MILLS

FIND DIANN ON SOCIAL MEDIA:



[@diannmills](#)



[@diannmills](#)



[@diannmillsauthor](#)

DiAnn Mills is a bestselling author who believes her readers should expect an adventure. She weaves memorable characters with un-predictable plots to create action-packed suspense-filled novels. DiAnn believes every breath of life is someone's story, so why not capture those moments and create a thrilling adventure?

Her titles have appeared on the CBA and ECPA bestseller lists; won two Christy Awards; and been finalists for the Golden Scroll, Inspirational Reader's Choice, and Carol Award contests.

DiAnn is a founding board member of the American Christian Fiction Writers and a member of Advanced Writers and Speakers Association, Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and International Thriller Writers. She is the director of the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference and Mountainside Retreats, where she continues her passion of helping other writers be successful. She speaks to various groups and teaches writing workshops around the country.

DiAnn has been termed a coffee snob and roasts her own coffee beans. She's an avid reader, loves to cook, and believes her grandchildren are the smartest kids in the universe. She and her husband live in sunny Houston, Texas.

DiAnn is very active online and would love to connect with readers through her website at [diannmills.com](http://diannmills.com).

# TRACE OF DOUBT WORD SEARCH

Break the ice by asking your book group to do this word search, courtesy of DiAnn Mills, in your next meeting and see who can spot the words related to the story most quickly!

## TRACE OF DOUBT by DiAnn Mills Wordsearch

R M D R B T S A C R I F I C E A R I A I  
U W I Y B E J H G Q K D K B A K E R Y T  
Z P H H A I T G U C Z V H M J D O U B T  
X L B B U M W R S E Q E W K U I L E K S  
Q W S S P O Y U A H L A W L E R H Z D C  
U V H K Q N D J W Y F F C Q O I D W X K  
G J E N V E E D O G A X A H J V H E S E  
V S L P S Y N D S J K L G R U F E Y R X  
X M B F A I T H E R U W E T T R Y B V H  
O H Y H S X O D G C J K N T A M C K C X  
M E D Q Y R N S T V E E T T Y U M H H A  
P P F X N Y Z K R I L P W S F B I U G B  
A R K I Q T J E M C V G T E Y C Y W E I  
T I J C A B I N E N H O Q I L U G N D C  
X S V H E D S F R W X T T T O R P C I Y  
V O P G T M C I R L A C T J M N Y D E C  
M N B N I E C E S P U H G W G B Z Y S L  
V D E C O Z G H F T I X W Z R V R N B E  
K H M X C G R Q V I E V X C F X Y H J W  
V A H T R A C E J N F R V B Y P L W R G

deception

jewelry

sister

bakery

niece

Edie

sacrifice

church

murder

money

Doubt

Aria

betrayal

Shelby

faith

AmyJo

cabin

love

bicycle


Denton

prison

Trace

agent

FBI

Answer key on next page. 



# TRACE OF DOUBT WORD SEARCH ANSWER KEY

## TRACE OF DOUBT by DiAnn Mills Wordsearch

R M D R B T S A C R I F I C E A R I A I  
U W I Y B E J H G Q K D K B A K E R Y T  
Z P H H A I T G U C Z V H M J D O U B T  
X L B B U M W R S E Q E W K U I L E K S  
Q W S S P O Y U A H L A W L E R H Z D C  
U V H K Q N D J W Y F F C Q O I D W X K  
G J E N V E E D O G A X A H J V H E S E  
V S L P S Y N D S J K L G R U F E Y R X  
X M B F A I T H E R U W E T T R Y B V H  
O H Y H S X O D G C I K N T A M C K C X  
M E D Q Y R N S T V E E T T Y U M H H A  
P P F X N Y Z K R I L P W S F B I U G B  
A R K I Q T J E M C V G T E Y C Y W E I  
T I J C A B I N E N H O Q I L U G N D C  
X S V H E D S F R W X T T T O R P C I Y  
V O P G T M C I R L A C T J M N Y D E C  
M N B N I E C E S P U H G W G B Z Y S L  
V D E C O Z G H F T I X W Z R V R N B E  
K H M X C G R Q V I E V X C F X Y H J W  
V A H T R A C E J N F R V B Y P L W R G

deception

jewelry

sister

bakery

niece

Edie

sacrifice

church

murder

money

Doubt

Aria

betrayal

Shelby

faith

AmyJo

cabin

love

bicycle

Denton

prison

Trace

agent

FBI



# Meet Shelby Pearce

Answers  
courtesy of  
DiAnn Mills

*A word she'd choose to describe herself:* private

*One place she'd like to travel:* London, England

*Her favorite sport:* basketball

*Her favorite Bible verse:* 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)—“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

*What inspires her:* Creative means to show God’s love, which is why she enjoys creating jewelry.

*A dream she has for her future:* to help wayward girls find meaning and purpose in their lives through faith in God

*If she could live anywhere in the world, she'd live in:* Valleysburg. She feels this town is her destiny. Good people live there, and she desperately wants to be a part of the community.

*Her favorite color:* green for nurturing

# Meet Denton McClure

Answers  
courtesy of  
DiAnn Mills

*A word he'd choose to describe himself:* curious

*One place she'd like to travel:* New York City—for vacation, not work

*His favorite sport:* all of them!

*His favorite color:* blue

*His favorite Bible verse:* Isaiah 40:31—“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

*A dream he has for his future:* coach high school sports

*If he could live anywhere in the world, he'd live:* in a rural community with a few acres

*His dream job:* teach math and coach high school sports—make an impact on young guys



# Q&A with DiAnn Mills

Read this Q&A prior to your book club discussion to gain fresh insights into *Trace of Doubt*.

**Q.** Where did you come up with the idea for the plot of *Trace of Doubt*?

**A.** Great question! The plot came from a what-if moment. What if a teen loved her older pregnant sister so much that she'd confess to murdering her brother-in-law, a crime she didn't commit?

**Q.** What was your favorite scene to write in *Trace of Doubt*?

**A.** My favorite scene is Shelby's confession to her friends what really happened to her brother-in-law.

**Q.** What do you enjoy most in writing about the work of the FBI?



**A.** I enjoy creating authentic characters who mirror the FBI's mission to keep people safe and prevent crime while showing their human strengths and challenges.

**Q.** What inspired the personality traits of your main characters, Shelby Pearce and Denton McClure?

**A.** Shelby: a strong woman who'd been manipulated and betrayed. Yet she found faith and faced the horror of her mistakes. Denton McClure: an FBI agent who stepped up to the role with bravery and determination but believed in the eyes of his family he was a failure.

**Q.** Can you tell us about some of the research that went into writing about the legal situations involved in *Trace of Doubt*, especially as it relates to what it's like for ex-convicts (particularly women) to work toward rebuilding their lives

**A.** The research focused on women's prisons in Texas. Many have solid programs to help the inmates learn skills to make a transition into public life. But that doesn't mean every guard has the best intentions. Gangs exist alongside solid Bible studies and counseling. The success of a woman's rehabilitation depends on her commitment to better herself and learn from past mistakes.

# 5 Moments from *Trace of Doubt* to Discuss with Your Book Club

Courtesy of DiAnn Mills

---

- 1. In chapter 1, Shelby leaves prison alone to begin life over as a new creation in Christ. Put yourself in Shelby's shoes. How would you feel if your family abandoned you in an unfamiliar town, especially your sister you lied to protect? Is love a reason to lie? Ever?**
- 2. Officer Hughes carries animosity for Shelby because of what he perceives she's done, not that she'd paid her debt to society. Have you ever been guilty of judging someone because of their past? Did fear play into your reaction? Pride? Why?**
- 3. Shelby discovers Denton's friendship is a cover-up to trick her into revealing where she supposedly hid a large sum of money. Most of us have been deceived by another person befriending us for less than honorable reasons. When you learned about the ruse, how did you feel? React? Were you able to forgive? Does forgiveness mean forgetting?**
- 4. Denton realizes he has feelings for Shelby. The thought scares and angers him. Think back to a time when you deeply resented another person. Was there a valid reason to dislike them? Did you pray for this person? Did you discover your resentment was unfounded? How did you seek reconciliation with the other person?**
- 5. Shelby believes she must be the one to reveal evidence to stop her sister's crimes. If you assumed a role like Shelby, would you have the strength to put yourself in danger? Risk another prison term? What leads Shelby to risk her life? Is there more than one reason?**





# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) Shelby Pearce hasn't been in touch with her family since she went to prison fifteen years ago. She notes that she and her sister "were raised with the knowledge of unconditional love, but I learned some deeds were unforgivable." How does Shelby handle her family's estrangement? What justifications does her family make for keeping their distance? If you were in their shoes, would you think Shelby's crime is "unforgivable"?

2.) What makes Denton McClure so convinced of Shelby's guilt? What begins to change his mind? When did you realize there was more to Shelby's story?

3.) Early in Shelby and Denton's relationship, she asks him: "At the end of your life, what will you have to show for your quest?" How does Denton answer that question? How would Shelby answer it? Do their answers change over the course of the story? Think about your own life. What will you have to show for it?

4.) Shelby's presence in Valleysburg creates friction among the townspeople, even within the church. What objections to her are raised? Who comes to her defense? How do you think your church might respond to an ex-con in the congregation?

5.) On the way to her family's house, Denton tells Shelby: "People we trust often fail us." Who failed Denton? Who failed Shelby? How do Denton and Shelby reconcile with those people? Has anyone failed you? When is it important to forgive? Is there ever a time a person should just move on from a relationship?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE





6.) When Denton lands in the hospital and Shelby and a couple retired agents are targeted at a safe house, he asks her how people can believe in a God who allows bad things to happen. What does Shelby say about this? How would you answer Denton's question?

7.) Denton has fond memories of his grandmother, especially nights they spent studying the stars in the sky. In what ways was she planting seeds of faith in him? Who else contributes to seeing those seeds sprout? Is there someone in your life you've planted seeds with or watered those seeds for?

8.) What reasons does Shelby have for hesitating in starting a romantic relationship with Denton? How might her objections be overcome? What happens in relationships after mistakes are made? Is it always possible to start over or are some mistakes fatal?

9.) Shelby's niece reminds her that sometimes it's better not to profile other people. Who has the hardest time with prejudging in this story? What lessons can be learned from them?

10.) Clay Pearce asks Shelby: "Ever hear knowledge is horizontal but wisdom is vertical?" What is he trying to communicate to Shelby? What does this maxim mean to you?

11.) Clay also reminds Shelby that "sacrifice always has a price." What sacrifice does Shelby pay and what does it cost her? What does she gain through her sacrifice? What have you sacrificed, paid, and gained?

12.) By the end of the story, Shelby understands that she can't "right any of Marissa's wrongs—or even my own," but she determines to stop the crimes. Who is the only One who can right our wrongs?



# RECIPES

What pairs better with a great book discussion than some tasty treats? If you're on the search for some delicious goodies to share with your group, check out the following recipes from DiAnn Mills!

**P.S.** Be sure to exercise caution when making these recipes! Some recipes may contain allergens.



# THE ONLY BROWNIE RECIPE YOU'LL EVER NEED

*Recipe by DiAnn Mills*

## Ingredients:

### Brownies:

- 2 eggs
- ½ cup butter
- 1½ squares bitter chocolate (or use ⅓ cup dry cocoa and 1 tablespoon more butter)
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup chopped nuts

### Frosting:

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 3 tablespoons cocoa

**To make the brownie batter:** Beat eggs very lightly; set aside. Melt butter and chocolate. Add sugar and beat well. Add to beaten eggs. Fold in flour, salt, vanilla, and nuts. Place mixture in eight-by-eight-inch pan. Bake slowly, forty minutes at 325 degrees.

### To make the frosting:

Mix well. Add enough boiling water to mix (2½ tablespoons). Pour over warm cake.

**Note:** I always double this recipe and use a nine-by-thirteen pan.





# Fresh Apple Cake

*Recipe by DiAnn Mills*

---

## **Ingredients:**

- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1¼ cups salad oil
- 2½ cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 4 cups finely diced Granny Smith apples
- 1 package butterscotch chips

## **Directions:**

Combine first eleven ingredients in order given. Mix well and top with butterscotch chips. Do not grease pan. Bake at 325 degrees for one hour. Delicious fall recipe.





# DIANN'S OATMEAL COOKIES

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup (½ pound or two sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 cup raisins or dried cranberries
- ¾ cup chopped pecans
- 3 cups rolled oats (We use Quaker Quick or Old Fashioned. Do NOT use instant.)

## DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease two large cookie sheets or line with Silpat or parchment paper.

In a large mixing bowl, beat butter until creamy. Add the brown sugar and white sugar and beat until fluffy, about three minutes. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Add the vanilla extract.

Mix flour, salt, baking soda, cinnamon, and nutmeg together in medium bowl. Stir the dry ingredients into the butter-sugar mixture. Stir in the raisins (or cranberries) and nuts. Stir in the oats.

Refrigerate for thirty minutes or freeze dough for fifteen minutes.

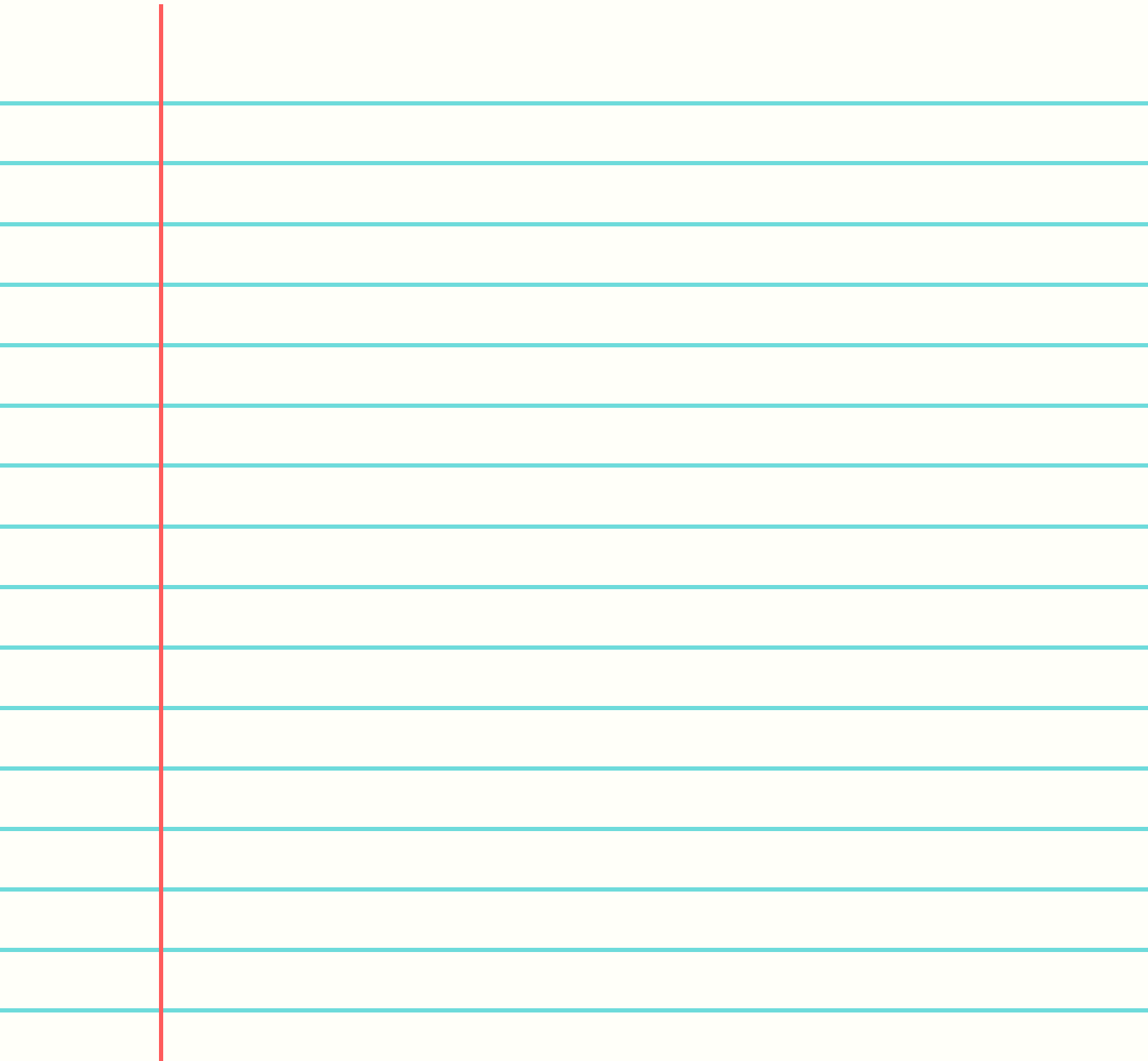
Spoon out the dough by large tablespoonfuls onto the prepared cookie sheets, leaving at least two inches between each cookie.

Bake until the edges of the cookies turn golden brown, about ten to twelve minutes. Note that the cookies will seem underdone. They will firm up as they cool.

Cool one minute on cookie sheets. Then carefully remove them, using a metal spatula, to a wire rack. Cool completely.



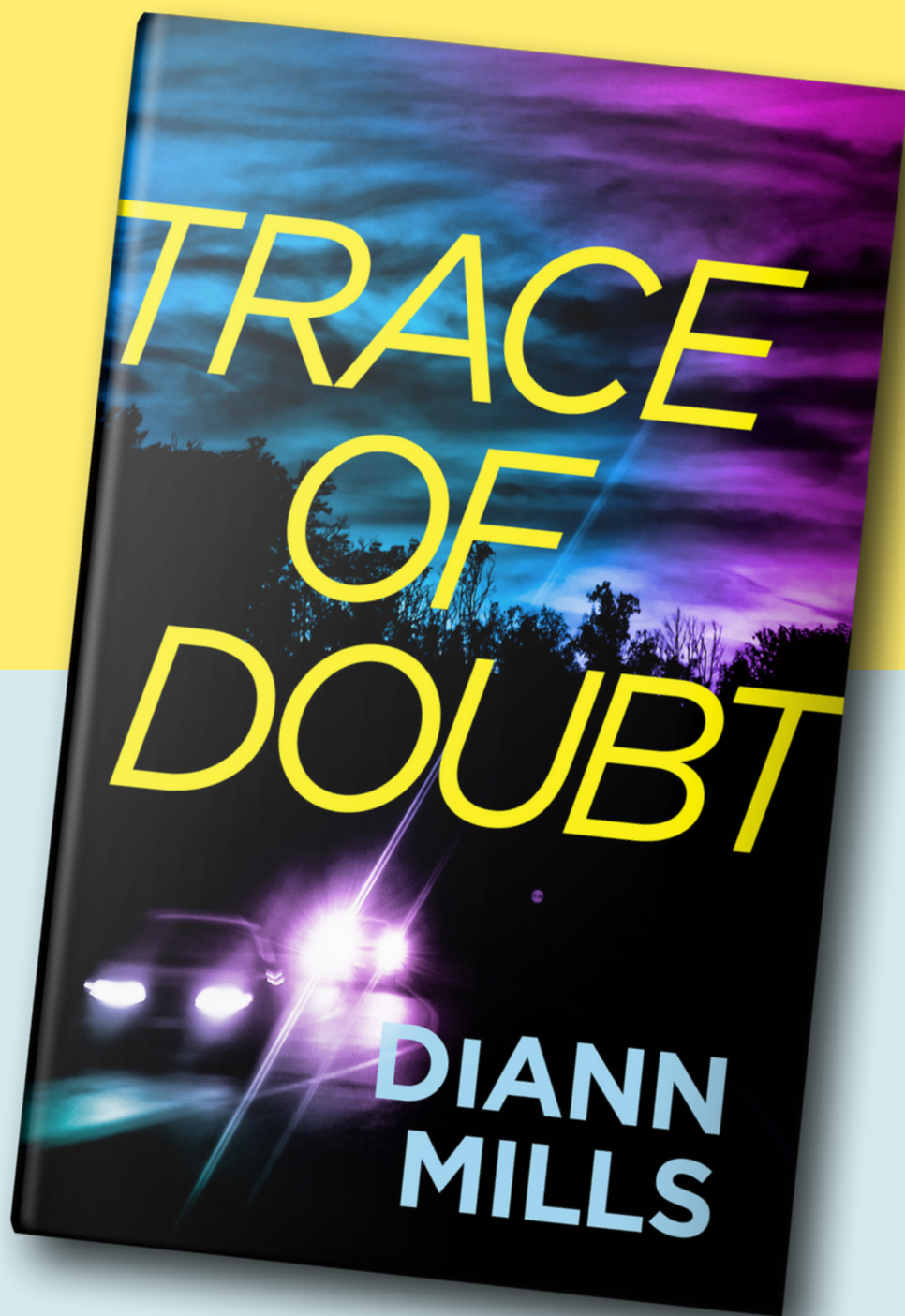
# BOOK CLUB NOTES



A series of horizontal teal lines for writing, with a vertical red margin line on the left side.



**THANKS FOR CHOOSING**



**FOR YOUR BOOK CLUB!**

**KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR  
A NEW ROMANTIC  
SUSPENSE NOVEL BY  
DIANN MILLS**

**COMING IN 2022 FROM  
TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS**

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT**

**crazy4  
fiction  
.com**



**DISCOVER  
MORE GREAT  
READS BY  
DIANN MILLS**

---

**SHOP THEM ON [TYNDALE.COM](https://www.tyndale.com)**